

# **Impact of Incarceration on Children**

**Tennessee Department of Correction  
Division of Planning & Research**

**Presented at the 2003 Tennessee Correctional Association Conference  
Nashville, Tennessee**

# **Agenda**

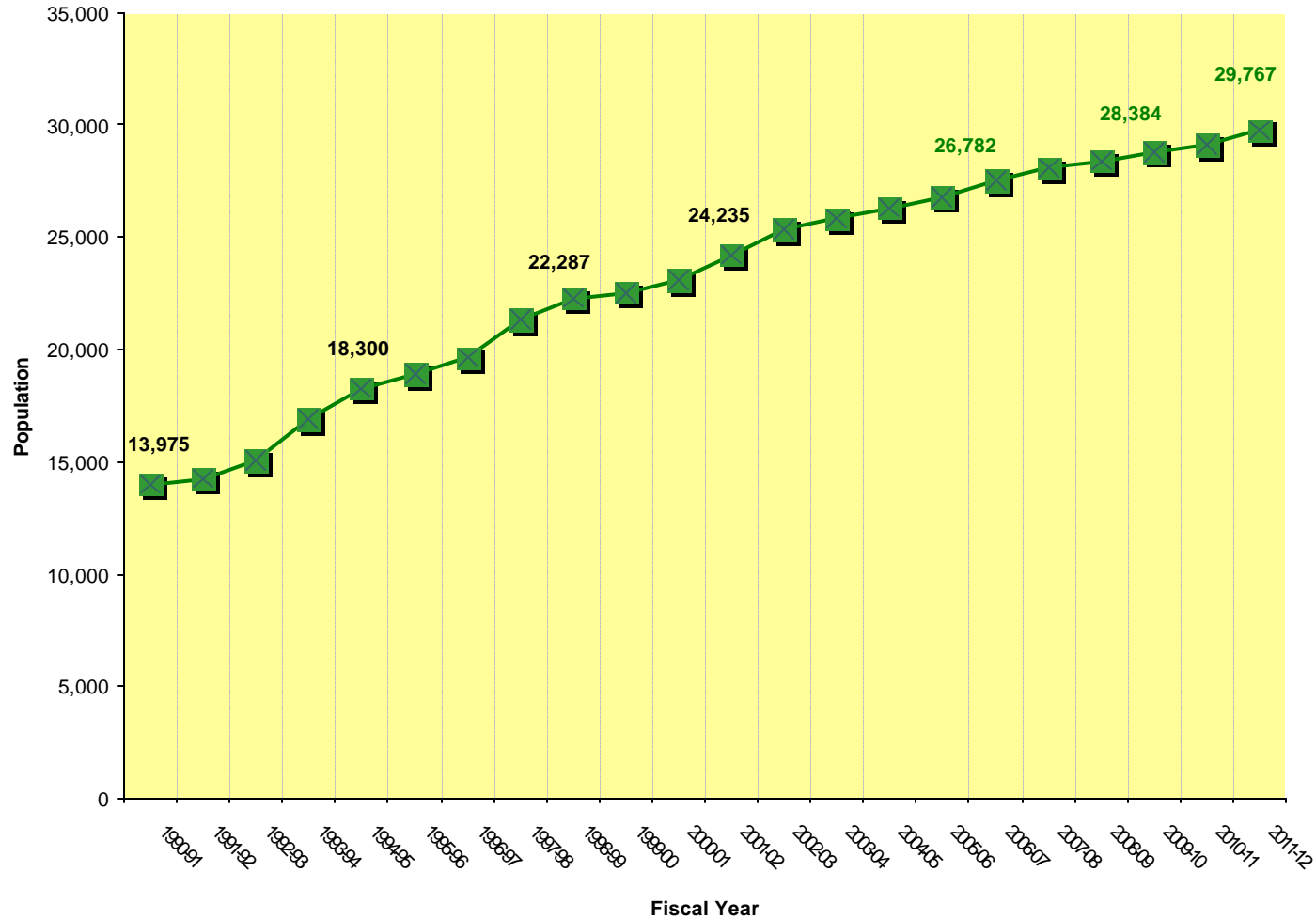
- **Prison population growth**
  - National
  - Tennessee
- **Parents in Prison**
  - National Trends
  - Tennessee Data:
    - **Incarcerated Parents & Their Children**
      - 1995 TDOC Research Brief
- **Issues & Implications for Mother & Child**
- **Research Brief Update**

# **U.S. Prison Population Growth**

- **Nationally, the average annual growth rate of the prison population from 1995-2002 was 2.9%.**
- **Among female felons, the average growth rate from 1995-2002 was 5.1%, with an overall increase of 42%.**
- **In comparison, the male felon population had an average annual growth rate of 3.5%, with an overall increase of 27%.**

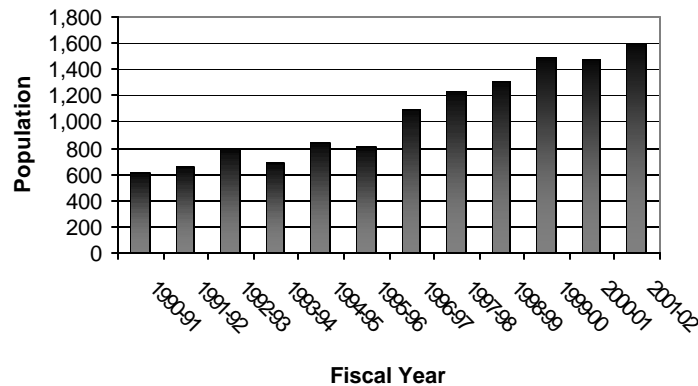
# Tennessee Felon Growth

Total Felon Population (Historical and Projected), 1991 - 2012



# Female Felons - Tennessee

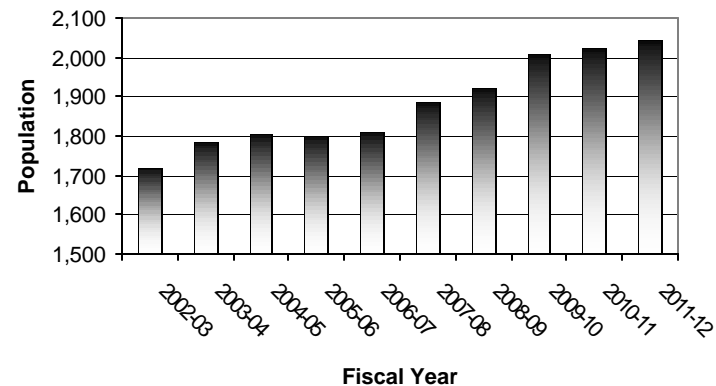
**Incarcerated FEMALE felon population at fiscal year-end, 1991 - 2002.**



**The average annual growth rate for the female felon population in Tennessee from 1991- 2002 was 9.8%.**

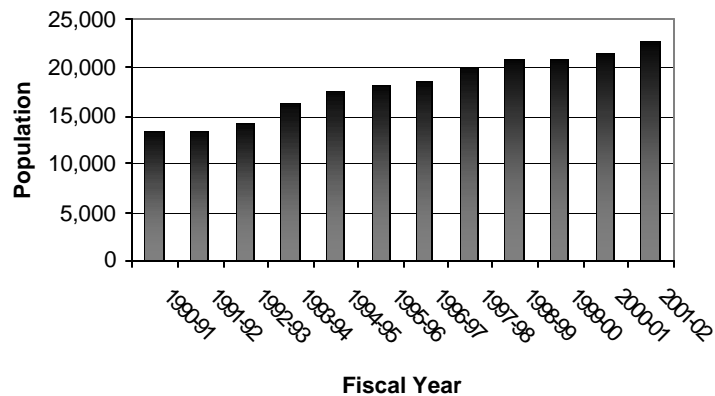
**The anticipated growth rate for female felons in Tennessee over the next ten years is 2.5% with an overall increase of 28% (from 1,598 in June 2002 to 2,046 in June 2012).**

**Projections for incarcerated FEMALE felon population at fiscal year-end, 2003 - 2012.**



# Male Felons - Tennessee

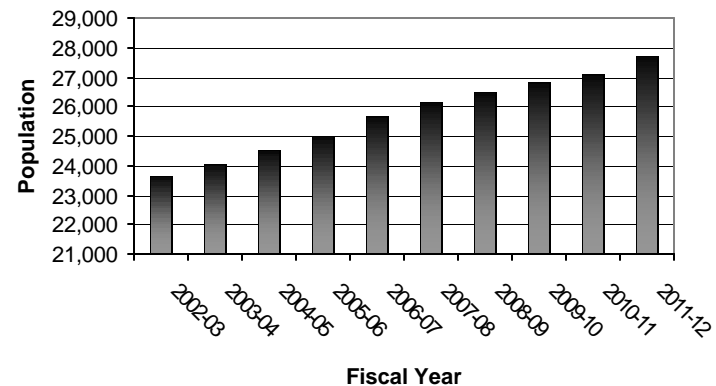
**Incarcerated MALE felon population at fiscal year-end, 1991 - 2002.**



**The average annual growth rate for the male felon population in Tennessee from 1991- 2002 was 5%.**

**The male felon population in Tennessee is expected to increase 22.8%, from 22,637 in 2002 to 27,721 in 2012, with an average annual growth of 2.1%.**

**Projections for incarcerated MALE felon population at fiscal year-end, 2003 - 2012.**



# What is the impact?

- **Economic**
  - **Loss of workforce**
  - **Cost**
- **Social**
  - **Parent**
  - **Child**

Parents in Prison

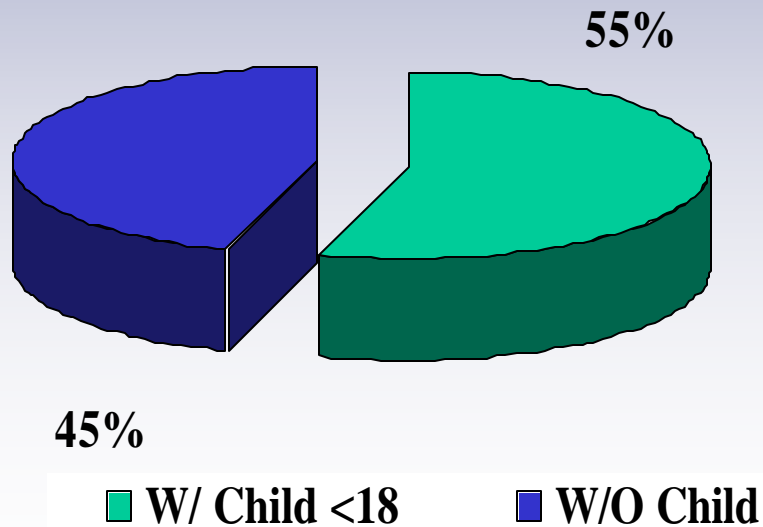
National Trends



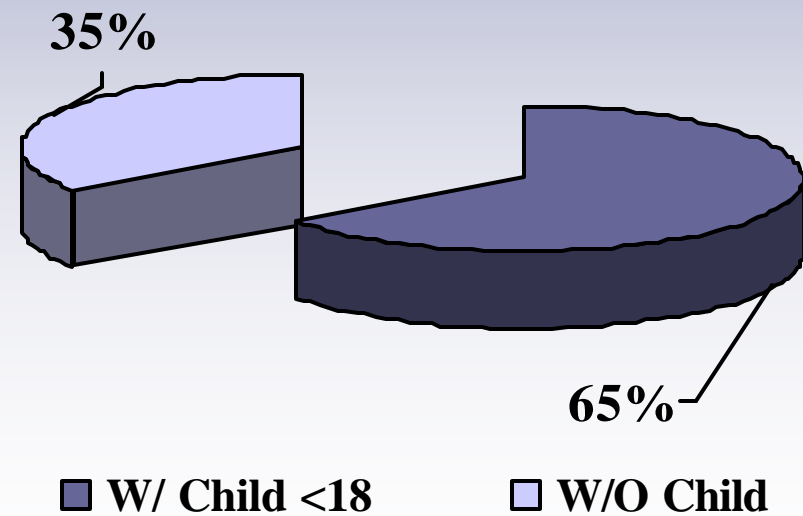
# Parents in Prison - National Trends

- In 1999, 55.4% of state prisoners were parents with a child under 18.

**Incarcerated Males - 1999**



**Incarcerated Females - 1999**



# Characteristics of Offenders with Children

- Female: From single parent home where other relatives have been incarcerated;
- Male: From single parent home with *at least* one family member having been incarcerated. More than *one-third* had an immediate family member that was incarcerated.

# Parents in Prison

- 55% of incarcerated males had a child under the age of 18. 32% had two or more children.
- 65% of incarcerated women were mothers with a child under the age of 18.

# Custody of Child

- Of male inmates with children, 89.6% indicate child is now in mother's care.
  - 1.8% indicate child in foster/state care.
- In comparison, of female inmates with children only 28% indicate child in father's care - (52.9% in care of grandparent).
  - 9.6% indicate child in foster/state care.

# Children of Incarcerated Parents

- From 1991-1999, the number of minors with an incarcerated parent grew by 60% nationwide.
- In 1999, 22% of children w/ incarcerated parent were under the age of 5.

Parents in Prison

Tennessee Data

# **Children & Families of Incarcerated Felons (TDOC, April 1995)**

## **Purpose:**

- Gather information
- Estimate the number of affected children
- Identify prison visitation policies & programs nationwide

# Summary of Findings

## (TN Data)

- 68% of inmates were parents.
  - 67% of males
  - 81% of females
- Average 2.4 children each.
- Estimated 17,500 children affected.
  - 12,600 under 18.
- 32% of children on public assistance.



(Summary - cont.)

- 40% of felons with children reported trouble with the law prior to age 18.
- 31% of felons with children reported previous incarceration in juvenile facility.
- 5% of male inmates and 9% of female inmates have children under 18 who have been in trouble with the law.
- 4% of male inmates and 7% of female inmates have children under 18 who have been in a juvenile detention facility.

(Summary - cont.)

- Visitation:

- Frequency:

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
• Weekly:	24%	27%
• Monthly	30%	31%
• Several times per year	29%	26%
• Yearly	15%	17%

- Average distance from child:

- Males - 176.96 miles
    - Females - 218.4

# **Importance of Parent-Child Bond**

Research indicates that sustained family ties help:

- Reduce recidivism and improve inmate behavior.
- Increase the likelihood of ability to regain custody after release.
- Child development.

Largest obstacle: Distance of prison from child's home.

# How can family ties be maintained?

- Overnight visitation:
  - Friday PM to Sunday PM.
  - Separate facilities/living quarters.
  - “Camp Celebration” & “Camp Chippewa”
  - Prison nurseries.
- Increased visiting hours
- Parenting Classes
- Location of Inmate

# Effectiveness of Visitation Programs

- Impact on inmate behavior
  - Positive: Behavioral
- Long term effects on child
  - No conclusive research

- **Purpose:**

- Replicate and update demographics and statistics from 1994 study.
- Compare attitudes of females who participate in weekend visitation to those who participate in standard visitation.

# Research Brief Update

## Incarcerated Mothers:

A Status Report & Examination of  
Female Felons and Parenting

# Hypothesis

- Females who participate in the weekend visitation program will perceive more positive attitudes in children upon arrival/during visitation and more negative attitudes on departure.
- Females who participate in weekend visitation will self report more positive attitudes before and during visitation and more negative attitudes after visitation.



# Methodology

- Sample survey administered as in 1994 study.
- Comparisons made:
  - Current vs. 1994 data
  - Weekend visitation vs. standard visitation



**Tennessee Overnight Visitation**

# Questions?

*(Literature references available upon request)*